



**TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF
S.B. 105**

Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Pamela Heller, and I am a staff attorney at the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, a statewide organization working to ensure that all Connecticut residents have access to housing of their choice. We support Senate Bill 105, an Act Establishing a Right to Housing. The Act focuses on preventing homelessness and increasing support for folks experiencing homelessness. The prevention efforts include financial assistance, legal assistance, and connection to services, all of which would greatly benefit many of our clients. In particular, we witness the value of legal representation in eviction proceedings and know from our research that having counsel can greatly increase a tenant's ability to walk out of court without a judgment against them.

In addition to establishing vitally important objectives, SB 105 also includes provisions that require state agencies to undertake an impact analysis when issuing regulations that impact housing authorities, landlords, shelters, and low-income tenants. While it's laudable to ensure that administrative agencies carefully consider the impact of regulations on housing, in our experience regulatory actions that might inconvenience landlords or others generally exist to protect tenants. We would caution that the language of the Bill in its current form could unintentionally undermine the goal of establishing a right to housing by making it more difficult for agencies to enact regulations that protect tenants. We support suggestions for changes advanced by other legal services agencies to address this concern.

Finally, based on our experience representing tenants in housing discrimination and eviction cases, we have several suggestions for additional ways to create a right to housing:

- Expand eligibility for rapid rehousing programs to allow individuals facing eviction to move prior to judgment and provide longer term support.
- Strengthen existing source of income discrimination protections. Landlords persist in denying people who attempt to use these programs despite existing law. As a result, tenants using vouchers accept less ideal housing options, often in areas of concentrated poverty, and sometimes even lose their vouchers if they can't find a landlord who accepts them.
- Give tenants need more options for addressing poor conditions when landlords refuse to make needed repairs by (1) providing more support for municipal code enforcement and (2) making it easier for tenants to recover damages.
- Expand protections against "no cause" evictions.

Thank you very much for raising this bill. Please strengthen and pass SB 105.